



**Enclosure 2a**  
**May 26, 2021**

**Minutes of the February 3, 2021  
Remote Meeting**

**Pursuant to Governor Raimondo's Executive Order 20-34, this meeting was held remotely.**

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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Chair Barbara Cottam called the February 3, 2021, meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and acknowledged that a quorum was present. Due to social distancing restrictions, this meeting was held remotely:

**Remote Participation:**

Michael Almeida  
Amy Beretta  
Colleen Callahan  
\*Margo Cook  
Barbara Cottam  
Karen Davis  
Timothy DelGiudice  
Patricia DiCenso  
Dennis Duffy  
\*Brandon Feliz  
Jo Eva Gaines  
Rachelle Green  
\*Mike Grey  
Thomas Izzo  
Marta Martinez  
Michael Mello  
Lawrence Purtill  
Mackenzie Raimond  
\*Jeffery Williams

**Absent:**

Marianne Monte  
\*Stephan Pryor

\*Ex-officio, non-voting member

Public access was provided to attendees of this Zoom webinar in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and the provisions of the Executive Order; contact information was provided for those experiencing technical difficulties.

After going over some ground rules, Chair Cottam asked for a motion for acceptance of the agenda.

## **1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

Chair Cottam asked for a motion to accept the agenda of the February 3, 2021, meeting.

On a motion duly made by Jeffery Williams and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

<b>VOTED:</b>	That,	the Rhode Island Board of Education accepts the agenda for the remote meeting of February 3, 2021
	Vote:	14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:
	YEAS:	Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Timothy DelGiudice, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Michael Mello, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

[Member Gaines joined the meeting after the approval of the agenda]

## **2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

### **2a. Minutes of the December 10, 2020, Meeting**

Chair Cottam asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the December 10, 2020, meeting and noted that Member Gaines had to abstain as she did not attend that meeting.

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Timothy DelGiudice, it was

<b>VOTED:</b>	That	the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the minutes of the December 10, 2020, meeting
	Vote:	14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative
	YEAS:	Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Timothy DelGiudice, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Michael Mello, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Member Gaines joined the meeting after the approval of the minutes]

**2b. Minutes of the January 6, 2021, Joint Special Meeting**

Chair Cottam asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the January 6, 2021, meeting.

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Timothy DelGiudice, it was

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the minutes of the January 6, 2021, meeting

Vote: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Timothy DelGiudice, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Michael Mello, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Member Gaines joined the meeting after the approval of the minutes]

**3. OPEN FORUM**

Chair Cottam announced that no one had signed-up to speak and that no written comments had been submitted in advance of the meeting.

**4. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS**

**- Elementary and Secondary Education**

Commissioner Infante-Green began by thanking everyone for their hard work throughout the year and expressed that it is because strong education leaders, like the ones on this Board, that we are able to be successful in the work that we do. She also acknowledged the hard work and the creativity demonstrated by school leadership and teachers as well as the collaboration across sectors throughout the pandemic. She noted how far we have come since the decision was first made to

reopen classrooms and provide high-quality education, both in-person and remotely, when needed. Over the past few months, the State has received access to increased testing and made those tests available to our schools as an additional level of mitigation. All of the districts have a plan of how they are testing and school leaders have stepped-up to make sure testing is provided throughout the remainder of the school year. Work continues to ensure that students and teachers are back in the classroom and have what they need to do so safely. Since January 1, school prevalence remains far lower than community spread at 1.4%, which is very encouraging. Early on, RIDE partnered with Pure Edge to provide our educators with mindfulness training, which has been an amazing resource. In addition, RIDE has worked with the Yale Center for Emotional Learning and several other partners, to provide free social emotional training to everyone connected to education.

Lastly, Commissioner Infante-Green shared that to address the systemic inequities that have always existed and have been exasperated by the pandemic, RIDE reached out Sal Khan of Khan Academy to bring Schoolhouse-World to Rhode Island to provide free tutoring from experts in the field, to students in grades 6-12, in mathematics and SAT prep. Tutoring is something that is typically too expensive or simply inaccessible to so many of our families, but is now accessible to everyone because of creative solutions like this platform.

#### **- Postsecondary Education**

Dr. Shannon Gilkey, Office of the Postsecondary Education Commissioner, began by expressing his gratitude for the outreach by Board members and the productive conversation that he had with Commissioner Infante-Green earlier in the week. He went on to give an update on COVID and shared that the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) has continued to serve as the liaison between the 11 institutions of higher education across the state as well as the R.I. Department of Health (RIDOH) and the Governor's Office, on the COVID response. He shared that the Governor has put an Executive Order as well as regulations in place for the institutions to return to in-person learning for the spring semester. Most of the institutions are doing at least 50% of student testing every two-weeks, and the roll-out of vaccinations has begun with certain groups, including police, fire, EMS staff, student health services, patient-facing clinical students, athletic trainers, and patient-facing faculty, who are over the age of 40.

Next, Dr. Frank Sanchez, President of Rhode Island College (RIC), gave a status update on where the college is in terms of COVID. Dr. Sanchez expressed that RIC is incredibly grateful for the guidance and support of RIDOH and the Governor's Office in planning for the spring semester. The college has worked very closely with RIDOH and agreed to operate with a predominantly remote instruction in the spring, similarly to the fall semester. Ninety-five percent of classes are currently remote and the college has further de-densified the residence halls, which are currently at 20% capacity, and has limited athletics. On the enrollment front, last fall the college saw a 6% reduction in enrollment, which is less than originally projected. Unfortunately, overall enrollment is down 7.8% as compared to this time last year, down by 9.4% in undergraduate population, but slightly up (1.6%) in graduates. Like most of the nation's institutions of higher education, RIC is very concerned about the upcoming fall enrollments as the applications are running far below the normal, due to the

pandemic. In terms of testing, RIC has about 1,000 students, faculty and staff on campus each week, so the college is engaging in all types of mitigation and surveillance activities. This semester the college setup its own testing site, offering rapid tests to the on-campus population to monitor for potential outbreaks, mainly focusing on the resident students, and encouraging weekly testing. The college also has a robust case tracing system in order to isolate positive cases and quarantine close contacts to avoid potential outbreaks. So far this semester, RIC has had five positive cases among students on campus and 25 have been quarantined for potential exposure, but as of the previous Monday, RIC had two positive student cases and no one quarantined. The strategy for fall opening is to plan for a return to in-person classes, while offering more options for students, remotely. If COVID continues to be a health threat, the college will be able to pivot from in-person, to predominately remote learning, if necessary. President Sanchez expressed how impressed he is by the faculty, staff and students in dealing with the crisis. He is extremely proud of the students from the School of Social Work who have been trained in case tracking and who now handle a majority of the follow-up with cases on campus, as well as identifying other needs of students, such as social emotional support.

Next, Dr. Meaghan Hughes, President of the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), highlighted the RI Promise program. She expressed that the college is grateful to Speaker Shekarchi as well as Senate President Ruggiero, who last week introduced standalone legislation proposing that the sunset clause on the RI Promise program be lifted. She noted that the program has been the single most significant driver behind the 15% increase in the statewide college going rate since its launch three and a half years ago, and has been at the very heart of the college's performance improvement experienced during that timeframe. President Hughes shared that as of this morning, CCRI's spring enrollment is at 11,525 students, but expects that it will drop a bit further by the 11:00 p.m. enrollment deadline. This is a 13% (1,600 students) drop from where the college was at this time last spring, but based on national data, the enrollment declines have hit two-year colleges particularly hard. CCRI expects to face continued downward pressure on enrollment in the near future, which means that the enrollment team now has two chief enrollment priorities going forward – retaining the more than 11,000 students currently enrolled by serving them well and supporting them to graduation, and working hard to reenroll the students who were forced to pause their education or the ones who never made it to the college, due to the pandemic. Dr. Hughes stressed that to keep students enrolled, the college needs to make sure that the faculty has the needed tools to teach effectively in this new environment and continues to deliver outstanding student support services, such as advising and tutoring. Ninety-three percent of classes continue to be delivered remotely and the faculty continues to participate in on-going professional development and workshops, so that they can continue to design and deliver high-quality online courses. This semester CCRI has been able to increase the number of on-campus courses, the ones that do require hands-on learning and in-person interaction, such as health science, biology and chemistry labs. As far as testing and vaccinations, CCRI remains in a primarily remote position, a decision that was made nearly a year ago, which continues to be based on the nearly 20,000 students that the institution would have served during this period. The reality of the students' and families' lives and communities – these students and their families are frontline workers who commute to the campuses and then head to their jobs and homes. In order to maximize the health of the students

and employees, CCRI made the decision to convert primarily to a remote teaching and learning environment. Looking ahead to summer and fall, CCRI is hopeful that it can safely bring more students back to campus for in-person learning. Unlike the State's residential colleges and universities, CCRI does not offer regular, on-campus testing, however, the college has participated in multiple surveillance testing events in partnership with RIDOH, including one that is currently taking place at the Westerly Education Center, with tests offered every week to students, faculty and staff. CCRI has also launched a public service campaign to encourage its community to get regularly tested for COVID, which has been effective. President Hughes concluded her report by acknowledging the strong and effective partnership and expertise of RIDOH and recognizing the remarkable work that every single faculty and staff member continues to do at CCRI.

Next, Commissioner Gilkey presented the second component of his report on the national trends in postsecondary education attainment. He expressed that there isn't good economic data on what is happening with the pandemic economy, but statistics learned from the post economy of the 2008 recession, is that 99% of jobs that were created and that paid more, required a secondary credential. He stressed that the value of programs in college majors, matters, as well as the alignment to local, regional and state economies, and that academic knowledge coupled with technical skills, equals workforce success in the economy. He shared that when speaking with his counterparts across the country, there are similar trends that are happening in education attainment in the pandemic climate - education across the spectrum is having a targeted strategic effort to get people back to work and earning livable wages through higher education attainment; higher education institutions across the board are joining forces to ensure businesses have a workforce that is trained and feel safe to returning to work in a healthy environment; and really going to war in accelerating the K-12 to postsecondary attainment pipeline. Commissioner Gilkey concluded his report by sharing some short-term wins that he has observed that can lead to long-term innovation in education attainment in general - reconnecting adults and expanding partnerships and strategies that leverage prior learning; upscaling earn and learn work-based learning opportunities; FAFSA completion rates; online tutoring; and increasing the short-term credentials that are aligned to the labor market. He stressed that in order to see some of the metrics shift, there needs to be a partnering with public and private institutions, the not-for-profit sectors and getting the communities to buy into why education attainment matters, as it needs to be state-led, but locally owned.

## **5. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **a. Rhode Island's Early College Programs: New Research on how the Programs Impact Students**

Spencer Sherman, RIDE's Chief of Innovation, framed the discussion by sharing that today's presentation is on all of the opportunities being offered to high school students - Advanced Placement Course; Concurrent Enrollment Program; and Dual Enrollment Program - to earn college credits, and brand new research by the Regional Educational Laboratory, on their impacts.

Next, Dr. Tammy Warner, Assistant Commissioner, went over what the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) has been doing to expand those opportunities. Dr. Warner gave an overview of the PrepareRI Dual Enrollment Fund that OPC manages, which covers tuition for student participation in dual and concurrent enrollment courses offered at the three public institutions of postsecondary education. She highlighted that since the fund's inception in the 2015-16 school year, there have been significant increases in student participation and credits earned, saving Rhode Island families more than \$45M over the course of the program.

Next, Mr. Sherman went over what RIDE is currently doing to accelerate the statewide initiatives to prepare all students for success in college and career – All Course Network (ACN); Expanding AP coursework opportunities; Diploma Plus; and Pathways Endorsements.

Next, Dr. Jessica Bailey and Dr. Katherine Shields, Research Scientists with the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northeast and Islands, whose mission is to support improving student outcomes through working with partners such as educators and policy makers, with a focus on connecting data and research, presented on the results of the rigorous research study on RI's accelerated college credit programs – participant rates by school characteristics; the impact of participation; and outcomes of each type of program.

In closing, Mr. Sherman noted that the take away is that investments in accelerated college credit courses are working and should be expanded, as they are making a big difference in the lives of students and saving families millions of dollars.

Board Members discussed different ways in which to use the findings to do a better job with engaging the urban districts; training teachers and recruiting students to take advantage of these opportunities; delving into which students are taking the courses; the barriers to participation; and access to the programs. They also requested data on the number of students who are taking the courses, by district/schools, how well students are performing on the exams and the credits earned. Concerns were also voiced around too much emphasis being placed on acceleration as it can prove to be problematic, if not handled in a proper way, and suggestions on putting a bit more emphasis on enrichment programs.

b. Updates on the new EnrollRI Platform and Expanded All Course Network

Liz Texeira, RIDE's Director of Innovation, and Jen LoPiccolo, RIDE's Education Specialist, went over the EnrollRI platform, RI's new one-stop shop for educational opportunities for students. They noted that equal access doesn't necessarily lead to equal participation and although any student in the State can take free classes in various programs, not all students actually take advantage of these opportunities. Despite having equal access, there are equity gaps as systems are often very difficult to navigate and the processes can be opaque. This user-friendly program that is easy to navigate and

translatable to many languages, which was funded through grants from the U.S. Department of Education and launched in December 2020, hosts the ACN, public charter school enrollment, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) program information. Since the launching of EnrollRI, RIDE has seen a large number of families using it and will continue building it as a family-friendly portal in the coming months and years.

Board Members asked for data on which districts have signed MOAs with RIDE.

## 6. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Chairman Cottam stated that the next meeting of the RI Board of Education is scheduled for Wednesday, May 26, 2021, at 5:30 p.m.

## 7. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Cottam called for a motion to adjourn tonight's meeting.

On a motion duly made by Timothy DelGiudice and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

**VOTED:** That, the Rhode Island Board of Education adjourns.

**Vote:** 15 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, as follows:

**YEAS:** Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Timothy DelGiudice, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Mike Mello, Marianne Monte, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams

**NAYS:** 0

**ABSTAINS:** 0

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.